

Preface

An Information Center is an effective way of giving users direct access to computing resources. In the first paper, Hammond discusses considerations for the implementation of such a facility. The author provides a comprehensive view of requirements, organizational implications, and criteria for the evaluation of the effectiveness of an Information Center.

The benefits of structured and modular programming techniques are well understood in the data processing community. Although these methods result in significant improvements in application development productivity over earlier methods, current system architectures limit their ability to share reusable functions. The data flow architecture described by Stevens builds on structured design concepts to provide a higher level of function sharing, reduced complexity, and an application view that is consistent with the user's view.

As in the design of all systems, there are numerous cost-versus-service-level tradeoffs to be made in the design of a communications network. The IBM Systems Network Architecture (SNA) provides facilities that allow the user to optimize network resources so as to minimize the impact of resource constraints. In our third paper, George and Young describe the flow control procedure implemented in SNA to maintain high system throughput during periods of heavy traffic.

Now that business professionals are coming into direct contact with data systems, success of both user and system depends critically on system usability. Though systems may be rich in function, if they are difficult to use they may be of limited value. Pearsall presents a technique for the development of usability scenarios that can aid in evaluating the human factors of system interfaces before the systems are actually implemented.

The opportunity to improve office productivity has resulted in the development of a wide variety of systems, which, to be most effective in meeting their productivity objectives, must communicate with one another. In the final paper in this issue, Schick and Brockish describe the Document Interchange Architecture that is one of a family of architectures developed for the office environment.

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